

**Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration**

**Report to Congress on the Establishment of  
Additional National Cemeteries**

**Annual Status Report**

**As Required by the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act,  
Public Law 106-117**

**May 2005**

Major Process	Atlanta/ Georgia National Cemetery	Detroit/ Great Lakes National Cemetery	South Florida	Oklahoma/ Ft. Sill National Cemetery	National Cemetery of the Alleghenies/ Pittsburgh	Sacramento
Potential Sites Identified (within the primary 75- mile service radius)	Completed Mar 2000	Completed Mar 2001	Completed Apr 2000	Completed Apr 1996	Completed Oct 2000	Completed Oct 2000
National Environmental Policy Act Compliance	Completed Dec 2000	Completed Jan 2002	Completed Feb 2002	Completed Sep 1996	Completed Sep 2001	Completed Sep 2002
Final Site Selected	Completed Dec 2000	Completed Apr 2002	Completed Apr 2002	Completed Feb 1997	Completed Mar 2002	Completed Oct 2002
Land Acquisition	Completed Apr 2001	Completed Sep 2002	Completed Aug 2002	Completed May 1998	Completed Mar 2003	Completed Jul 2004
Master Planning & Design Development Contract Award	Completed Mar 2002	Completed Nov 2002	Completed Jul 2003	Completed Oct 2000	Completed May 2002	Completed Sep 2004
Phase 1 Construction Documents Preparation Contract Award	Completed Mar 2003	Completed Nov 2003	Estimate Jun 2005	Completed Jul 2001	Completed Aug 2004	Estimate Oct 2005
Phase 1 Construction Contract Award	Completed Dec 2004	Completed Sep 2004	Estimate Feb 2006	Completed Mar 2002	Estimate Jul 2005	Estimate Sep 2006
Phase 1 Construction Completion	Estimate Dec 2007	Estimate Aug 2006	Estimate Dec 2007	Completed May 2004	Estimate Aug 2007	Estimate Sep 2008

Note: Letters in **BOLD** indicate that the major process has been completed.

## **New National Cemetery Status Report**

### **SITE:**

Georgia National Cemetery (Atlanta, GA)

### **PAST ACTIVITY:**

The Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs toured the top 4 of 12 recommended sites in July 2000 and met with Senator Max Cleland, Congressman Bob Barr, and State Director of Veterans Affairs Pete Wheeler. On July 12, 2000, the Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs identified a Cherokee County location as the preferred site. The late Mr. Scott Hudgens, a World War II veteran, had offered to donate approximately 770 acres. URS Corporation, Greiner, Woodward, and Clyde conducted the environmental assessment process and the final report concluded with a "Finding of No Significant Impact" on the environment. On April 3, 2001, members of Congress, members of the Hudgens family, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs attended a ceremony to mark the Hudgens family's land donation to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Award of a contract for master planning was made on March 27, 2002, to Rochester & Associates of Atlanta. The master plan concept for the layout of the cemetery was completed in March 2003. Cherokee County constructed an access road to the new cemetery site with VA providing \$1.4 million towards road construction. On March 1, 2004, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Atlanta area cemetery would be Georgia National Cemetery. Construction documents for Phase I have been developed and the construction contract was awarded in December 2004.

### **CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

Construction is underway and a full-time VA resident engineer has been assigned to the project.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

A Fast Track burial section is scheduled to open in November 2005. This will enable the cemetery to begin conducting burials prior to completion of Phase I construction which is scheduled for December 2007.

### **BUDGET:**

The FY 2000 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and environmental assessment processes.

The FY 2001 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$3 million for advance planning and design development of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$28.2 million for construction.

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None.

## **New National Cemetery Status Report**

### **SITE:**

Great Lakes National Cemetery (Detroit, MI)

### **PAST ACTIVITY:**

Representatives of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) actively worked with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Directorate, area real estate agents, and the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA's) Loan Guaranty officials at the VA Regional Office in Detroit in 2001 to identify eight potential parcels of land suitable for a new national cemetery. Evaluation of the characteristics of each site resulted in the selection of four "best sites." A preferred site was selected and the environmental assessment completed in January 2002. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved selection of a 554-acre site in Oakland County, Michigan, on April 23, 2002. A purchase price of \$6,156,000 was negotiated with the owners and land acquisition was completed on September 13, 2002. The architect-engineering firm, URS Corporation of Farmington Hills, MI, was awarded the contract for the Master Plan and Design Development on November 21, 2002. The design documents were completed and the construction document contract was awarded on November 17, 2003. On March 1, 2004, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the Detroit area cemetery would be named Great Lakes National Cemetery. The construction contract was awarded in August 2004.

### **CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

Construction of a Fast Track burial section is underway.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

A Fast Track burial section is scheduled to open in August 2005. This will enable the cemetery to begin conducting burials prior to completion of Phase I construction, which is planned for August 2006.

### **BUDGET:**

In FY 2000, VA made \$125,000 available for the site selection and environmental assessment processes.

The FY 2001 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$500,000 for advance planning of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$18 million for the purchase of land for new cemeteries in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California.

The FY 2003 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$1.7 million for design of a new national cemetery and preparation of construction documents.

The FY 2004 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$8.7 million for construction.

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None.

## **New National Cemetery Status Report**

### **SITE:**

South Florida (Miami, FL)

### **PAST ACTIVITY:**

Representatives of NCA and the Florida Department of VA visited 11 prospective sites in south Florida and developed a recommendation of "top sites" for further consideration. The Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and the Director, Florida Department of VA, visited the top three sites in August 2000. Two top sites in Palm Beach County were selected. In October 2000, URS Corporation, Greiner, Woodward, and Clyde began the environmental assessment (EA) on each of the sites to assess the impact of developing the land for use as a cemetery. Subsequently, the owner of one site removed it from consideration. The EA continued with the remaining location. The EA consultant identified two factors that required further investigation. Realizing the negative potential of these findings, NCA directed the EA consultant to expand their review to two additional sites that had been identified during initial site evaluation visits.

The EA was completed and the period for public comment closed in mid-January 2002. Following the Secretary's selection of the preferred site in West Palm Beach County, a purchase price of \$11,250,000 was negotiated with the owners and acquisition of the 313-acre property was completed on August 6, 2002. The architect-engineering firm, Miller Legg & Associates of Pembroke Pines, FL, was hired in July 2003 to perform the master plan and design work. This included preparation of a design for a Fast Track development.

### **CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

VA is working to obtain environmental clearances from the Corps of Engineers in order for the project to proceed. VA has contacted the headquarters of the Corps for assistance in addressing delays in obtaining permits. As soon as environmental permits are received construction of the Fast Track burial area can begin.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

The Fast Track construction contract should be awarded in June 2005. A Fast Track burial section is scheduled to open in March 2006. This will enable the cemetery to begin conducting burials prior to completion of Phase I construction. Phase I Construction award is scheduled for February 2006, with completion in December 2007.

### **BUDGET:**

The FY 2000 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and environmental assessment processes.

The FY 2001 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$500,000 for advance planning of a new national cemetery and \$15 million for land acquisition.

The FY 2002 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$2 million for design of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2003 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$23.3 million for construction of a new national cemetery.

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

Delays in obtaining environmental clearances from the Corps of Engineers have impacted the

cemetery's development schedule. The contract awards for preparation of construction documents and for construction have slipped. As a result the completion of Phase I construction will be delayed. In addition, construction of the Fast Track burial area cannot begin until environmental permits are received.

### **New National Cemetery Status Report**

**SITE:**

Ft. Sill National Cemetery (Oklahoma City, OK)

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

Four hundred acres were acquired from Department of Army. The master plan was completed in October 2000 and construction documents in July 2001. A Fast Track burial section for interments prior to completion of all construction activities at the new Ft. Sill National Cemetery was completed and a dedication ceremony was held in November 2001. The Phase I construction contract was awarded on March 13, 2002.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

The Phase I construction contract was completed in May 2004.

**NEXT STEPS:**

N/A

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2001 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$12 million for construction. All Phase I development costs are fully funded.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None

### **New National Cemetery Status Report**

**SITE:**

National Cemetery of the Alleghenies (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

The Pennsylvania State Legislature established a Cemetery Site Selection Committee to assist in locating sites and scheduling site visits. NCA staff visited Pittsburgh during June 2000 to meet with the State's Cemetery Site Selection Committee. NCA staff toured 11 proposed sites.

In October 2000, the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs toured the three top sites. Based upon these visits, the Under Secretary identified the Morgan Farms site, 15 miles southwest of Pittsburgh, as the most desirable and feasible location. The Morgan Farms location was also the preferred site named in the Cemetery Site Selection Committee's report that was submitted to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. A contract for an EA of the Morgan Farms site was awarded in December 2000 and the final report was completed in September 2001. A contract for master planning was awarded in May 2002. Purchase of the first of two parcels was completed in

December 2002 for \$2,310,000. The purchase of the second parcel was completed in March 2003 for \$1,761,700. The combined acreage of both properties is 275 acres. Marshall-Tyler-Rausch of Pittsburgh completed the cemetery master plan on November 15, 2003, and has completed design documents.

#### CURRENT ACTIVITY:

Fast Track construction is currently underway with an estimated completion in July 2005.

#### NEXT STEPS:

NCA anticipates awarding the Phase I construction contract in July 2005 with completion planned for August 2007.

#### BUDGET:

The FY 2000 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and environmental assessment processes.

The FY 2001 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$1 million for advance planning of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$18 million to be available for the purchase of land for new cemeteries in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California.

The FY 2003 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$16.4 million for construction of a new national cemetery.

#### SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:

On Friday, April 15, 2005, VA was informed that Washington County tax officials had sold one parcel, 139 acres, of the cemetery property for lack of payment of delinquent taxes. VA purchased the property in question in December 2002 for \$2.3 million. Chicago Title Insurance Company was retained to conduct the closing of the purchase and provide a title insurance policy. At the time of closing, taxes due to Washington County were identified and the amount was deducted from the seller's proceeds. Chicago Title submitted payment by check to the County to satisfy taxes due. Apparently the checks were never cashed by the County and taxes were considered delinquent and penalty charges applied. On September 23, 2004, Washington County sold the property at a tax sale to Jambeth Investments, LLC of Marco Island, FL for \$40,000.

Chicago Title is pro-actively working on resolving the tax payment issue and pushing to invalidate the sale of the property. The VA's Office of General Counsel (OGC) has contacted the Washington County Solicitor, as well as the U.S. Attorney for the region, for assistance in resolving this matter.

OGC is of the opinion that VA is the legal owner of the property in question. The construction of the national cemetery will continue uninterrupted with initial burials expected this summer. The offices of Senators Specter and Santorum and Congressman Murphy have been contacted and apprised of this issue.

## **New National Cemetery Status Report**

### **SITE:**

Sacramento, California

### **PAST ACTIVITY:**

NCA officials worked closely with representatives of the California Department of VA and local realtors to identify suitable locations for a new national cemetery. A joint VA/State site evaluation team visited nine sites in the Sacramento area during October 2000. Several potential cemetery sites were identified and the best three were chosen for evaluation in the EA. A 1,133-acre tract in Solano County, known as the Hayman site, was designated as the preferred alternative. The EA was completed and resulted in a finding of no significant impact. The EA was made available to the public on August 16, 2002, and the 30-day public comment period ended on September 16, 2002. Comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of the cemetery. NCA and the Hayman site property owner obtained independent appraisals and negotiated terms for the sale of the property. A boundary survey delineated 561 acres for purchase. Acquisition of the property was completed in July 2004.

### **CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

NCA selected Carter Burgess as the architect/engineering firm to design the cemetery and master planning is currently underway.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

Award of a contract for preparation of construction documents is scheduled for October 2005.

### **BUDGET:**

The FY 2000 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and environmental assessment processes.

The FY 2001 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$500,000 for advance planning of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$18 million to be available for the purchase of land for new cemeteries in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California.

The FY 2003 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$1.7 million for design of a new national cemetery and preparation of construction documents.

The FY 2005 VA, HUD, & Independent Agencies appropriation included \$21.6 million for construction of a new national cemetery.

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None.

**Status of New Cemetery Development**  
**National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

Establishment of a national cemetery includes these major processes:

Major Process	Bakersfield	Birmingham	Columbia/ Greenville	Jacksonville	Southeastern Pennsylvania	Sarasota
<b>Potential Sites Identified (within the primary 75-mile service radius)</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>	<b>Completed Jan 2005</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2005</b>	<b>Completed Apr 2004</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>
<b>National Environmental Policy Act Compliance</b>	Estimated Dec 2005	Estimated Dec 2005	Estimated Dec 2005	Estimated Dec 2005	Estimated Dec 2005	Estimated Dec 2005
<b>Final Site Selected</b>	Estimated Feb 2006	Estimated Feb 2006	Estimated Feb 2006	Estimated Feb 2006	Estimated Feb 2006	Estimated Feb 2006
<b>Land Acquisition</b>	Estimated Sep 2006	Estimated Sep 2006	Estimated Sep 2006	Estimated Sep 2006	Estimated Sep 2006	Estimated Sep 2006
<b>Master Planning &amp; Design Development Contract Award</b>	Estimated Oct 2006	Estimated Oct 2006	Estimated Oct 2006	<b>Estimated Oct 2006</b>	Estimated Oct 2006	Estimated Oct 2006
<b>Phase 1 Construction Documents Preparation Contract Award</b>	Estimated May 2007	Estimated May 2007	Estimate May 2007	Estimated May 2007	Estimated May 2007	Estimate May 2007
<b>Phase 1 Construction Contract Award</b>	Estimated Apr 2008	Estimated Apr 2008	Estimate Apr 2008	Estimated Apr 2008	Estimate Apr 2008	Estimate Apr 2008
<b>Phase 1 Construction Completion</b>	Estimate Apr 2010	Estimate Apr 2010	Estimate Apr 2010	Estimated Apr 2010	Estimate Apr 2010	Estimate Apr 2010

Note: Letters in **BOLD** indicate that the major process has been complete

**Status of New Cemetery Development**  
**National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

SITE:  
Bakersfield, California

PAST ACTIVITY:  
On Veterans' Day, November 11, 2003, President Bush signed Pub. L. No. 108-109 authorizing the establishment of six national cemeteries within four years in the areas of the country with the greatest need according to a recent demographic study of the veteran population. Bakersfield was one of those six areas. NCA initiated contact with respective State and local representatives and Veterans' Groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting their assistance in identifying possible cemetery sites. One site has been offered as a potential location for the national cemetery. The Tejon Ranch Company has expressed an interest in donating land to the VA for a cemetery, and has identified 2,000 acres for



consideration. VA will evaluate two 500-acre parcels for EA.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

A contract to prepare the EA of these sites was awarded in December 2004. NCA staff and the EA consultant visited the site in March 2005, and also met with the local water district regarding providing water to the site.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The EA is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. Land acquisition is planned in FY 2006.

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2005 appropriation for VA included \$125,000 for the site selection and Environmental Assessment processes. The President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries directed by Pub. L. No. 108-109.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

**SITE:**

Birmingham, Alabama

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

On Veterans' Day, November 11, 2003, President Bush signed Pub. L. No. 108-109 authorizing the establishment of six national cemeteries within four years in the areas of the country with the greatest need according to a recent demographic study of the veteran population. Birmingham was one of those six areas. Subsequently, NCA initiated contact with respective State and local representatives and Veterans' Groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting their assistance in identifying possible cemetery sites. Four sites adjacent to the American Village complex in Montevallo, AL, were offered for VA consideration. An NCA representative met with Congressman Spencer Bachus (R-6th – AL) and local officials at American Village in May 2004.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

A contract to prepare the EA was awarded in December 2004. The four sites, ranging from 40 to 500-acres, are undergoing preliminary environmental analysis.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The EA is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. Land acquisition is planned in FY 2006.

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2005 appropriation for VA included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries directed by Pub. L. No. 108-109.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

**SITE:**

Columbia/Greenville, South Carolina

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

On Veterans' Day, November 11, 2003, President Bush signed Pub. L. No. 108-109 authorizing the establishment of six national cemeteries within four years in the areas of the country with the greatest need according to a recent demographic study of the veteran population. The Columbia/Greenville area was one of these six areas. NCA initiated contact with respective State and local representatives and Veterans' Groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting their assistance in identifying possible cemetery sites.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

A total of four sites have been offered for consideration in Union, Newberry, and Richland Counties. The Richland County site is a 500-acre tract within Fort Jackson in the City of Columbia that may be available for transfer from the Department of Army at no cost. It was determined that three sites are suitable for analysis in the EA process. In January 2005, a contract was awarded for preparing the EA of these sites.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The EA is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. Land acquisition is planned in FY 2006.

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2005 appropriation for VA included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries directed by Pub. L. No. 108-109.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

**SITE:**

Jacksonville, Florida

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

On Veterans' Day, November 11, 2003, President Bush signed Pub. L. No. 108-109 authorizing the establishment of six national cemeteries within four years in the areas of the country with the

greatest need according to a recent demographic study of the veteran population. Jacksonville was one of those six areas. NCA initiated contact with respective State and local representatives and Veterans' Groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting their assistance in identifying possible cemetery sites. On January 23, 2004, NCA representatives met with the Mayor, City Hall, and Representatives Ander Crenshaw (R-4th-FL) and Cliff Stearns (R-6th-FL) to discuss the process of establishing a national cemetery as well as a question and answer session. On the following day, NCA representatives participated in a Veterans Forum hosted by Representative John Mica (R-7th-FL).

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

Site visits in July 2004 and January 2005 identified a total of 14 potential sites. Two sites near the airport in Duval County have been determined to be the best suited for the national cemetery. A contract to prepare the EA of these sites was awarded in March 2005.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The EA is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. Land acquisition is planned in FY 2006.

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2005 appropriation for VA included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries directed by Pub. L. No. 108-109.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

**SITE:**

Southeastern Pennsylvania

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

On March 31, 2003, Representative Gerlach (R-6th-PA) introduced H.R. 1516 directing the establishment of a national cemetery for veterans in southeastern Pennsylvania. On September 23, 2003, NCA officials hosted a "Town Hall" meeting with southeastern Pennsylvania veteran leaders and representatives at the VA Regional Office in Philadelphia to discuss the alternative sites. Through general consensus of the group, the Pennhurst and Graterford sites were endorsed for further consideration. The sites are both owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. On Veterans' Day, November 11, 2004, President Bush signed Pub. L. No. 108-109 authorizing the establishment of six national cemeteries within four years in the areas of the country with the greatest need according to a recent demographic study of the veteran population. Southeastern Pennsylvania was one of those six areas. NCA representatives have considered 12 possible alternative sites. Sites were evaluated in the vicinities of Norristown, Valley Forge, Embreeville, Pennhurst, Graterford and Bucks County.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

NCA's environmental consultant has completed a preliminary assessment of the Pennhurst site, a

former mental hospital containing 35 buildings. They found that significant environmental clean-up, asbestos abatement, and building demolition would be required to make the site suitable for a national cemetery. Pre-construction costs for this remediation are estimated at \$14 million to \$24 million. Discussions are taking place regarding the possibility of reconfiguring a parcel for acquisition by VA that would minimize clean-up requirements.

The Graterford site, adjacent to a State prison, has a price set at \$150,000 per acre. Therefore, this site has been dropped from further consideration. NCA is considering other sites at this time, including northern Bucks County.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Once a viable site or sites are identified, the EA will be prepared. Upon conclusion of the EA, which is currently planned for March 2006, NCA will initiate actions for land acquisition.

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2005 appropriation for VA included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries directed by Pub. L. No. 108-109.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

**SITE:**

Sarasota County, Florida

**PAST ACTIVITY:**

On Veterans' Day, November 11, 2003, President Bush signed Pub. L. No. 108-109 authorizing the establishment of six national cemeteries within four years in the areas of the country with the greatest need according to a recent demographic study of the veteran population. Sarasota County was one of those six areas. NCA initiated contact with respective State and local representatives and Veterans' Groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting their assistance in identifying possible cemetery sites. On January 30, 2004, NCA representatives met with members of the Southwest Florida National Cemetery Advisory Committee appointed by Representative Katherine Harris (R-13th-FL) to discuss the process of establishing a national cemetery. Subsequently, with the Committee's help, a total of 23 sites were identified for consideration.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:**

Three sites were determined to best meet national cemetery site selection criteria. A contract to prepare the EA of these sites was awarded in December 2004.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The EA is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. Land acquisition is planned in FY 2006.

**BUDGET:**

The FY 2005 appropriation for VA included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries directed by Pub. L. No. 108-109.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:**

None